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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN RESPONSE: JUNE 18-19 GAERC

REF: STATE 80034

Classified By: Acting Economic-Political Counselor Phillip R. Nelson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Acting EconPol Counselor delivered reftel points on June 14 to Andreas Riecken, the MFA's European Correspondent. Riecken offered the following observations:

¶2. (C) Cuba: Riecken does not expect much discussion, as Council Conclusions have already been drafted at the working level. However, the Czech Foreign Minister will most likely make a statement.

¶3. (C) Central Asia: German Foreign Minister Steinmeier will present the Presidency's strategy. Riecken did not anticipate a detailed discussion.

¶4. (C) Serbia: The Foreign Ministers will welcome the resumption of the SAA process with Serbia. Riecken flagged visa liberalization as an issue that is important for the GoA. According to Riecken, certain Member States, such as France, oppose any liberalization on security and law enforcement grounds. Riecken acknowledged these concerns should be addressed, but he emphasized that the GoA would lobby for a balanced approach for the EU's visa policy vis-a-vis Serbia.

¶5. (C) Kosovo: Riecken said the Kosovo status issue presented the usual difficulties, including how fast to proceed with the UNSC resolution. Riecken acknowledged that there were significant differences of opinions amongst Member States on how strongly to support the Ahtisaari proposals. Austria, according to Riecken, continues to support the substance and timing of the Ahtisaari plan.

¶6. (C) Middle East Peace Process: Riecken noted that the Fatah-Hamas conflict had spiraled into a new and dangerous stage. The situation remained extremely fluid, so it was difficult to predict what the focus of the discussion would be in several days. Riecken noted that, immediately following the GAERC, Israeli FM Livni would brief EU ministers.

¶7. (C) Iran: Riecken expected Iran to be a subject of intense discussion, particularly the mechanics and advisability of moving forward with a new UNSCR. Riecken added that Larijani's Deputy and EU Political Director Cooper met on June 11 in Vienna to follow-up on the May 31 Solana-Larijani meeting. Riecken received a read-out that the meeting was not particularly productive.

¶8. (C) Sudan: According to Riecken, the French may initiate

a discussion on FM Kouchner's proposal to establish a humanitarian corridor. However, Riecken opined that the French would not go into specific details.

19. (C) Other Issues: WTO: Commissioner Mandelson, as is customary, will present an update on the WTO negotiations. Death Penalty: According to Riecken, Italy will present its initiative for a UN moratorium. Riecken noted that, while EU Member States oppose the death penalty, the Italian initiative does not enjoy much support. Libya: The Commission will give an update on the case of the convicted Bulgarian doctors and nurses. Kilner